

# Medal of Honor Recipient SFC Paul Ray Smith Commemorated

Vic Krepacki

**O**n May 13, 2005, several hundred guests of the SFC Paul Ray Smith Simulation and Training Technology Center (STTC), U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM), gathered outside the University of Central Florida (UCF) Research Park facility as the 3rd Infantry Regiment's Old Guard proceeded to the front of the building where a memorial had been erected to honor SFC Paul Ray Smith, Bravo Company, 11th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division (3ID). Along with the presentation of colors, the Guard's arrival also marked the arrival of Smith's posthumous Medal of Honor.

SFC Paul Ray Smith was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor April 4, 2003. Smith was killed while saving numerous American Soldiers' lives during Operation Iraqi Freedom. RDECOM commemorated Smith's honor and valor by naming the STTC facility after him. (U.S. Army photo.)



President George W. Bush originally presented the medal to Smith's family at a ceremony at the White House April 4, 2005, marking the second anniversary of the day that Smith, a fallen hero of *Operation Iraqi Freedom* (OIF), saved numerous American Soldiers' lives by paying the ultimate sacrifice. Now, it seemed fitting that such a great Soldier from the "Rock of the Marne" — as the 3ID is called among its brethren — would be honored on the eve of Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day weekend. Participants could feel his presence as his family — including his wife of 13 years Birgit, daughter Jessica Martha, son David Anthony and sister Lisa DeVane — proudly represented him at the ceremony. DeVane provided inspiring words about the brother who had always been a hero in her eyes.

The RDECOM STTC facility, whose mission is to enhance Soldier readiness

through simulation-enabled learning, was rededicated as the SFC Paul Ray Smith Center in a ceremony conducted Nov. 7, 2003. Smith, who was posthumously awarded the Silver Star and, subsequently, the Medal of Honor, was one of 12 Florida candidates who had served in OIF and were considered for the building's renaming in honor of all fallen Floridian servicemen.

MAJ Ray Compton, STTC Director of Military Operations, led the efforts for the May 13 Commemoration Ceremony, which included remarks by Program Executive Officer Simulation, Training and Instrumentation (PEO STRI) Commanding General BG Stephen M. Seay; University of Central Florida President Dr. John Hitt; U.S. Forces Command SGM Carl

Christian; Florida Gov. Jeb Bush; and DeVane. However, DeVane summed up the ceremony best.

"Paul ... spoke of being prepared to give 'all that I am to ensure that my boys make it home.'"

"Paul had an incredible love for the troops under his command," she said. "He spoke of being prepared to give 'all that I am to ensure that my boys make it home.' I can actually feel Paul's presence in this fantastic center, which bears his name,

and feel his enthusiasm and energy in the dedicated passion of the officers, noncommissioned officers, Soldiers and civilian engineers and scientists who run its daily operations."

That day, the Army not only commemorated SFC Paul Ray Smith and the Medal of Honor bestowed upon him for valor above and beyond the call of duty, but also commemorated a

STTC Director of Military Operations MAJ Ray Compton escorts Birgit Smith, widow of SFC Paul Ray Smith. They are followed by Smith's son David Anthony and daughter Jessica Martha, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Smith's sister Lisa DeVane, his mother Janice Pvirre, University of Central Florida President Dr. John Hitt and U.S. Army Chief of Engineers, Forces Command, LTG Carl Strock. (U.S. Army photo by Vic Krepacki.)





Members of the 3rd Infantry Regiment's Old Guard rehearse for the Medal of Honor Ceremony in front of the SFC Paul Ray Smith STTC building. (U.S. Army photo by Vic Krepacki.)



great American son, brother, husband and father who will always stand as a shining example of leadership and excellence to those Army members — civilian and military — who perform their duty at the SFC Paul Ray Smith STTC, in Orlando, FL. At the STTC, Smith will always be remembered as our Nation's first Medal of

Honor recipient in the global war on terrorism. His medal now sits permanently displayed behind a glass case on the wall of what he himself would no doubt feel is the most appropriate of places — the STTC Soldiers Conference Room. For it is here that Smith's family decided to display this highest of military awards for all who visit to

see — from general officers to local school students who one day themselves may be inspired to follow in the footsteps of a truly great American hero — SFC Paul Ray Smith.

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PEO STRI Commanding General BG Stephen M. Seay speaks about SFC Paul Ray Smith's ultimate sacrifice for his fellow Bravo Company Soldiers (11th Engineering Battalion, 3rd ID). (U.S. Army photo by Vic Krepacki.)

